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It is the gift of a Free People, a Democracy such as no other nation has surpassed. A democracy in which every man and woman bears the right to direct, so far as in him lies, the destiny of his country. A Democracy in which every citizen may aspire to the highest places of service and honor. Eight and forty states welded together into a mighty Union in which the ruling power is the people themselves, exercising inalienable rights. I bring you a government of the people, by the people and for the people, proud of its past, confident of its present, resolute of its future.

Washington. Men, women, and children of my country, great and marvelous are the gifts you have brought me today. Many things you tell me, I cannot understand. I can only wonder. America, in truth, is the most blessed among the nations of the earth. If, in such a land, men fail to achieve the highest state attainable by mankind, where is the hope of the world?

Is this dear land of mine, then, a land in which men do justice and love righteousness? Is it a land such as was dreamed of in my day, of liberty, equality and fraternity? Is this vast wealth of which you speak fairly shared by all?

Do the great parties emulate each other in service to the common good, or do men still strive selfishly to win for themselves, or for those of like mind, riches and advancement?

Does the spirit of toleration prevail? Are the minds of men open to receive new knowledge and larger wisdom, or are they fearful and unadventurous? Do the myriads of books and papers they read give them right understanding, and inspire them to just thoughts and noble deeds?

Are the tens of millions of men and women of the great Democracy—they who have the power to will what shall be—alive to its destiny? Are they faithful to their responsibilities, clean and fearless in their thinking, just and resolute in their acts?

Is my country still a refuge for the oppressed, a Promised Land for those who tread wearily long pathless ways?

In all that makes for material greatness, your wealth is immeasurable. But amid your riches, do not forget the words of ancient wisdom:

"The things which are seen are temporal, but those which are unseen are eternal."

(As the voice of Washington concludes its questioning, a last speaker will respond briefly.)

The tenth speaker. The vision is not lacking among us, though those who possess it are few; but it is the "grain of mustard seed—the "yeast"—that will in time transform the whole. And we, we to whom so much has been given, we children, will strive as best we can to have a share in making America a people whose God is justice and righteousness and peace.

THE NEGRO—A LINCOLN BIRTHDAY EXERCISE

IRENE I. CLEAVES

On the opening day of the Francis W. Parker School, after the Christmas recess, many of the younger alumni, not yet gone back to college after the vacation, come to the morning exercise. Miss Cooke always sets aside the day to welcome them. Standing on the platform, and looking past the alumni, back over the years, Miss Cooke on this

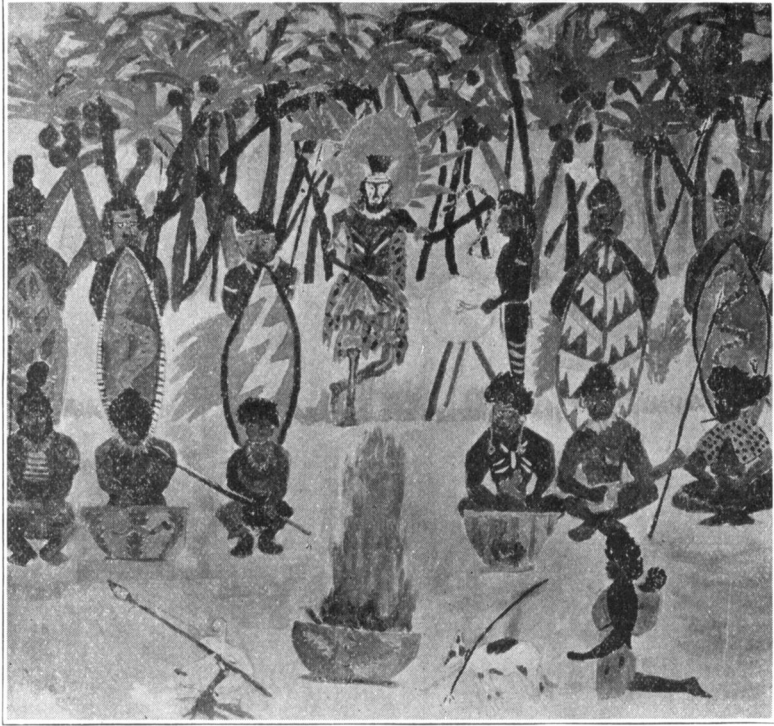
sixth of January asked the children, asked the alumni, asked the teachers, asked herself, what a school ought to do for its pupils. Trying to find the answer, I recalled Luc Durtain's dictum in *L'Autre Europe*—that the man who gets the most out of life is the man who is constantly in search of what science, art, and meditation can add to life. From the teacher's point of view I was profoundly struck with the remark when I read it. This, I thought, is the habit a teacher should foster in the minds of her pupils. But, on second view, I was more profoundly struck with what the Frenchman had omitted—human sympathies. So I answered Miss Cooke's question in my mind, saying that a school should train children so that they will get most out of life; but that means not only to foster the habit of constantly searching for what science, art, and meditation, add to life, but also the habit of independent judgment, and of kindly human relations. A few weeks' concentrated work on the problems of the negro help me to carry out these aims of mine with thirteen-year-old children better than almost any other unit of study.

Europeans soberly studying America and its problems are amazed at the combination of amused contempt with a certain evident hostility toward the blacks. In the south where the negro was so recently a slave, his former master likes him, and understands him, "so long as he knows his place"; the laboring whites hate him because his low standard of living keeps their wages low. In this atmosphere of scorn, fear, and hatred moves the black man—in his ears always the tales of lynchings, burnings, insensate murders, that flame out now and again, seizing victims almost at random.

In the north where the proportion of negroes is as yet low, the situation is less grave, though race riots show that there is lurking danger. In short, one recalls Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Kurtz' scribble of sincerity after seventeen pages of noble phrases "Exterminate all the brutes."

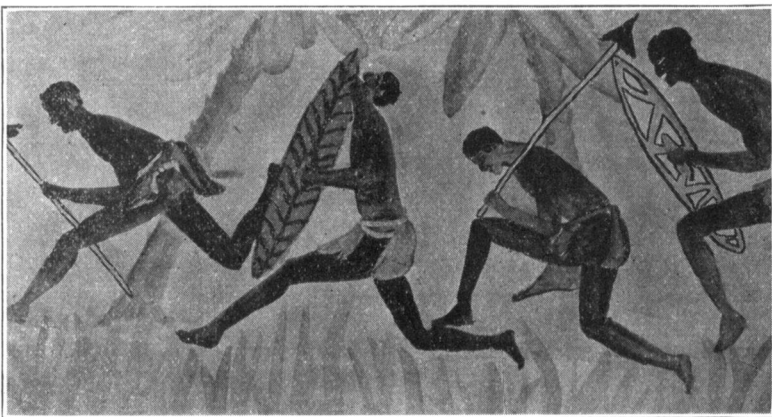
This past year, after the children had studied the life of Lincoln, had followed the progress of the slavery agitation from the landing of the first boatload of savage blacks in Virginia, down to the Civil War; had dramatized the exciting meetings of Congress at the great crises of 1820, 1850, and 1854, taking opposite sides in the heated controversies; I read them Vachel Lindsay's "Congo."

They enjoyed it almost too well. They seemed ready themselves "to beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom." They "laughed down the witch-men" in the person of the reader. But there was no doubt that they associated the negroes they see on the streets with the tattooed cannibals of the Congo; that they understood, after hearing the poem, his sense of barbaric rhythm, his gaiety, his superstition, his talent for the dance. Did they think, I asked, that they would like to make some pictures? They swarmed to the art room. Here are some of the drawings.



*"Then I heard the boom of the blood-lust song,
And a thigh-bone beating on a tin-pan gong."*

—Vachel Lindsay—The Congo.



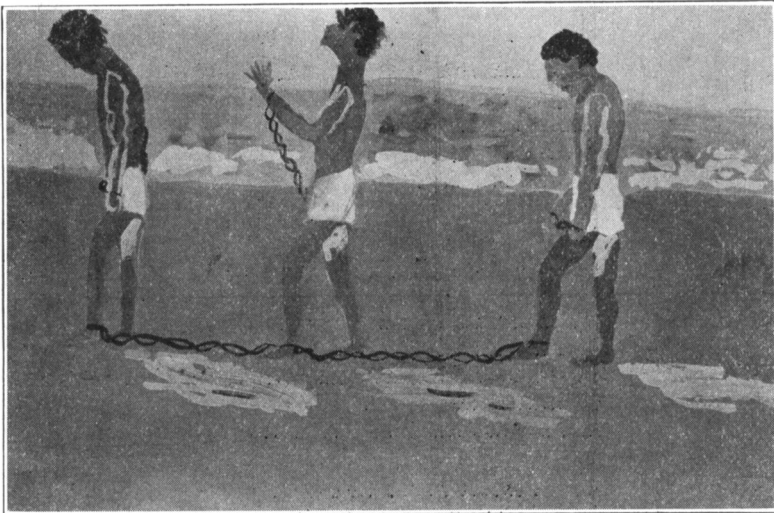
*"Then along that riverbank a thousand miles,
Tattooed cannibals danced in files."*

—Vachel Lindsay—The Congo.



*"Then I saw the Congo creeping through the black,
Cutting through the forest jungle with a golden track."*

—Vachel Lindsay—The Congo.



"We were not made eternally to weep."

—Countee Cullen.



Half the class working on the pictures

Another day I gave them the following poems by Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen:

OUR LAND

We should have a land of sun,
 Of gorgeous sun,
 And a land of fragrant water
 Where the twilight is a soft bandanna
 handkerchief
 Of rose and gold,
 And not this land
 Where life is cold.

We should have a land of trees,
 Of tall thick trees,
 Bowed down with chattering parrots
 Brilliant as the day,
 And not this land where birds are gray.

Ah, we should have a land of joy,
 Of love and joy and wine and song,
 And not this land where joy is wrong.¹

¹ Langston Hughes, in *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke (Boni).

I TOO

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes.

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow

I'll sit at the table

When company comes

Nobody'll dare

Say to me,

"Eat in the kitchen"

Then.

Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed,—

I, too, am America.¹

MINSTREL MAN

Because my mouth

Is wide with laughter

And my throat

Is deep with song,

You do not think

I suffer after

I have held my pain

So long.

Because my mouth

Is wide with laughter,

You do not hear

My inner cry,

Because my feet

Are gay with dancing,

You do not know

I die.¹

COLOR

Once riding in old Baltimore,

Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,

I saw a Baltimorean

Keep looking straight at me.

¹ Langston Hughes quoted in *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke (Albert and Charles Boni).

THE MORNING EXERCISE

Now I was eight and very small
 And he was no whit bigger,
 And so I smiled, but he poked out
 His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
 From May until December;
 Of all the things that happened there
 That's all that I remember.¹

I told them about Harlem, that great negro city in the heart of New York, that Mecca of the negroes of the world. The music-master taught the boys some beautiful spirituals. They heard and read negro folk-tales of animals, including of course, Uncle Remus, but also some others freer from the white man's touch. They heard the story of Toussaint Louverture.

In short I tried to make the study an intellectual, aesthetic, emotional experience. On Lincoln's birthday the class gave a program in the morning exercise, which their audience manifestly enjoyed and approved.

For almost any unit of work this would be the end. One would say, "It is satisfactory. They have worked from many angles. In planning their morning exercise they have reviewed and intensified the whole experience. They have shared it with others. Let us pass on to something else."

But in this case I had two evidences that the work was genuine.

Some weeks after Lincoln's birthday, a friend of Miss Cooke's who is head-mistress of a big, public school for negro children on the other side of the city, telephoned that she had a large chorus of children of from thirteen to sixteen years, who sang very well, and very interestingly, and that she would send them to sing for us at a morning exercise. When they arrived, Miss Cooke sent word to my class to come down and make them welcome. My boys and girls went down the stairs. There in the hall stood the big group of colored children, boys and girls—poor, as negroes mostly are, and uncertain of their ground in these unaccustomed surroundings. No one had given the eighth grade any suggestions. Virginia was ahead. She walked across the hall smiling, hooked her arm cordially under the arm of the first negro girl, and led her off gaily, to show her the school. Everyone followed her example as an entirely natural one. The negro boys, after their singing, played basketball with our boys for an hour. The director wrote that they had never passed such a happy day.

Later in the year I happened to meet a negro woman who talked very interestingly of work she was doing for poor children of her race in one of the southern cities. I asked her to come and tell the children about it. Miss Simon is a rarely convincing speaker, a dignified, impressive-looking woman. I have seldom seen an audience so completely one with the speaker as those forty children were with her. When she had finished, they would have stripped the shirts from their backs to send to the children she loved so much, and sacrificed so much for. They organized a bazaar at once. Everybody made something—sewed or embroidered or carved wood or hammered and sawed, or tied and dyed scarfs, or built a little playhouse to sell. They earned a good deal of money.

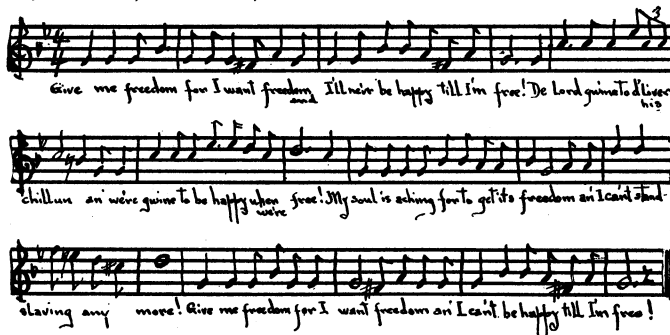
¹ Countee Cullen, in *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke (Boni).

In this period, their background of rather thorough information kept them from sentimentality. And their use of almost every avenue of expression in the course of their work made lasting an emotion of good will toward the negro. A snow ball in the mouth of hell, evidently. Many people in many ways, for many generations, will have to work to arrive at a sympathetic understanding of this problem. Meanwhile terrible disasters threaten—will probably occur.

But such a unit of work has, it seems to me, almost every element that one looks for when he selects a direction for children's efforts: an emotional strengthening of intellectual work, an intellectual foundation for activity for others. Our business is with the group of children before us. This project was a partial answer to my question—"What ought a school to do for its pupils?"

SONG¹

H. Grote, E. Pabst, 8th Grade, 1930



¹ The accompanying song was written for this exercise on the negro by two of the boys of the eighth-grade group, with Myrtle Cornish York of the Music Department.